

Our weekly community profile

In Black Creek, 'everybody pitches in'

Village is little, but its pride isn't

By Tom Vanden Brook

Press-Gazette

BLACK CREEK — Cliff Revels tended to the trade in his two-chair barber shop on Main Street, arguably as close to the pulse of a small community as one can get, and held forth.

The way Revels sees this Outagamie County village of 1,208, Green Bay and Appleton are just close enough for convenience but far enough away to maintain Black Creek's quality of life.

"Black Creek's a handy place," said Revels, 57. "We're close to the bigger cities — we're right in between Appleton and Green Bay — so it's a good place to live. The opportunity for business is here because we're so close to the Fox Valley. And there's a lot of money in the valley."

"Black Creek has a good environment to raise a family, too. The schools are good and there's very little crime."

The best of both worlds.

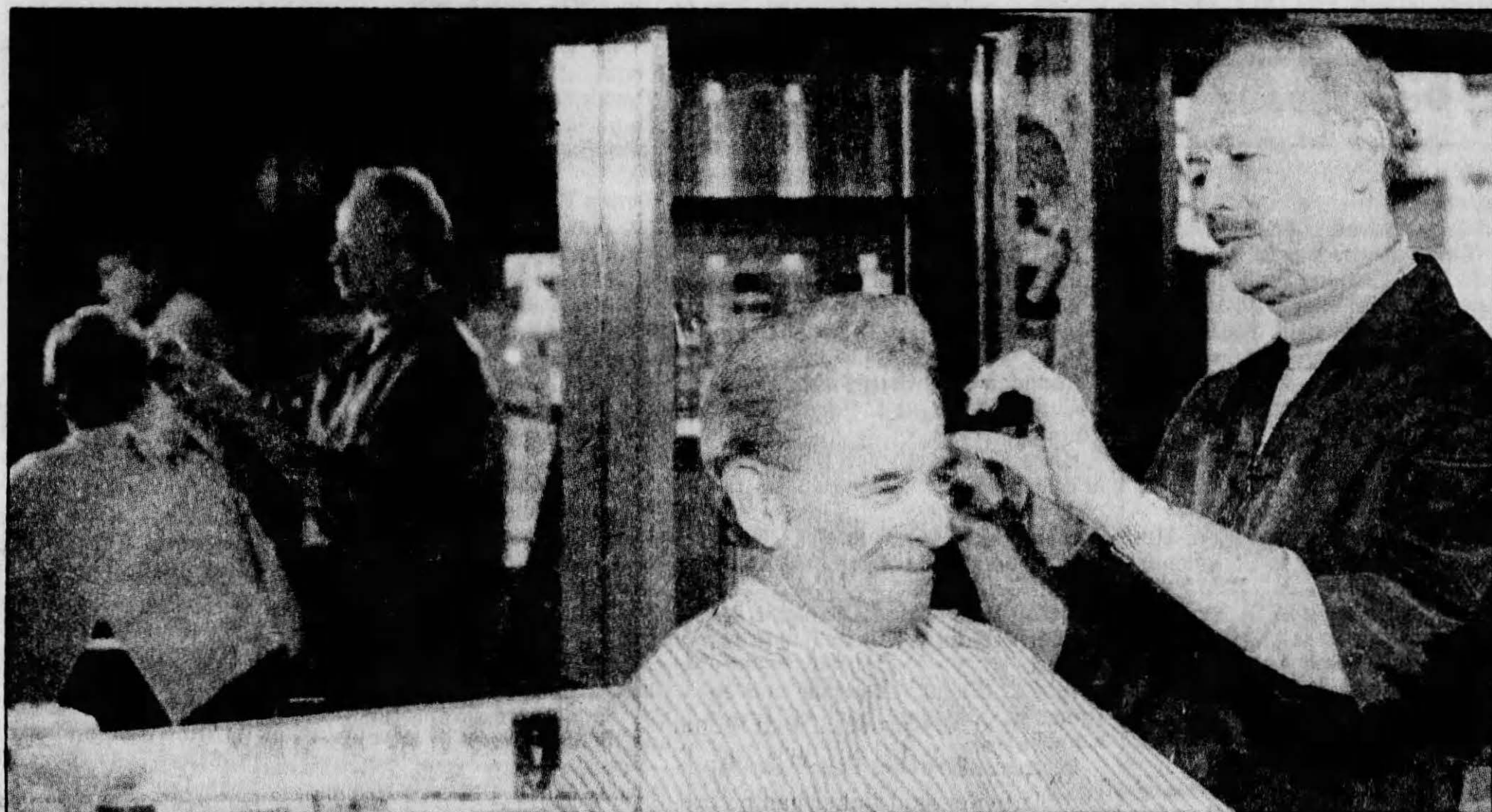
But being within 30 miles of two cities often erodes the identity of a smaller town. As residents of the smaller community seek jobs in the cities, they often relocate or simply commute, turning their towns into little more than extensions of the city.

But, as Black Creek's community leaders explained, residents here share a disposition to get projects accomplished at home and have an abiding sense of civic pride, helping the village retain the lifestyle it has built during its 128 years of existence.

Discussing their village, officials sat inside the very embodiment of its can-do attitude: a shining new, \$300,000 library financed entirely by the village.

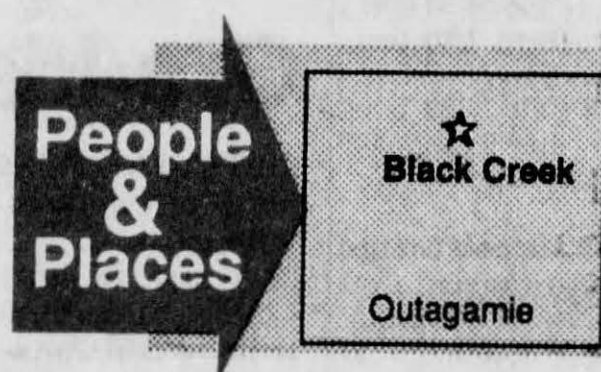
"When Black Creek starts a project, everybody pitches in," said Gloria Daelke, village clerk. "I think we've got one of the best communities of people for rallying together, sticking together and getting a project done."

"We've heard from people in surrounding communities that it seems like people from Black Creek really turn out when something needs to get done. We stick together like that. I think you can see that



Short cut: Black Creek's only barber, Clint Revels, gives a haircut to Dale Nichols of Shiocton recently in Revels' two-chair barbershop. Revels says he has

worked in many large cities, but he prefers the small-town atmosphere of Black Creek in Outagamie County.



This weekly feature looks at small area communities and the people who make them tick.

with this building we put up."

Marcia Brick, president of the Black Creek Village Library, said hometown pride is evident in the way homeowners and business interests first and foremost take care of their own backyards.

"We've got a lot of hard-working peo-

ple here," Brick said. "The majority of people here in Black Creek are that way. If you take a look around our village, you can just tell by the looks of their homes and yards how everything is kept up nicely."

"We really don't have too much that we don't want people to see. The residents, the manufacturers, everybody keeps their places up. I think we have that type of people here."

As a result, people born in Black Creek or who have moved here find it an attractive place to live and difficult place to leave.

Pamela Batte, a library board trustee and a former village trustee, said families with children would be hard-pressed to find a better school than the kindergarten through eighth-grade Black Creek Elementary or more moderately priced housing.

"The school is excellent," Batte said.

Press-Gazette photos
by Joan E. Gutheridge

"That's the first thing that parents coming into Black Creek look at. Our tax base is good, our homes are moderately priced, and I think just the general look of the community is good."

A strong economy further bolsters the village, according to Ray Nellis, vice president and manager of the Black Creek branch of Valley Bank. And a check of a village brochure bears him out; it lists 54 businesses operating in the village with several more in surrounding rural areas.

Nellis said dairy, sauerkraut and pallet production provide the lion's share of employment in Black Creek.

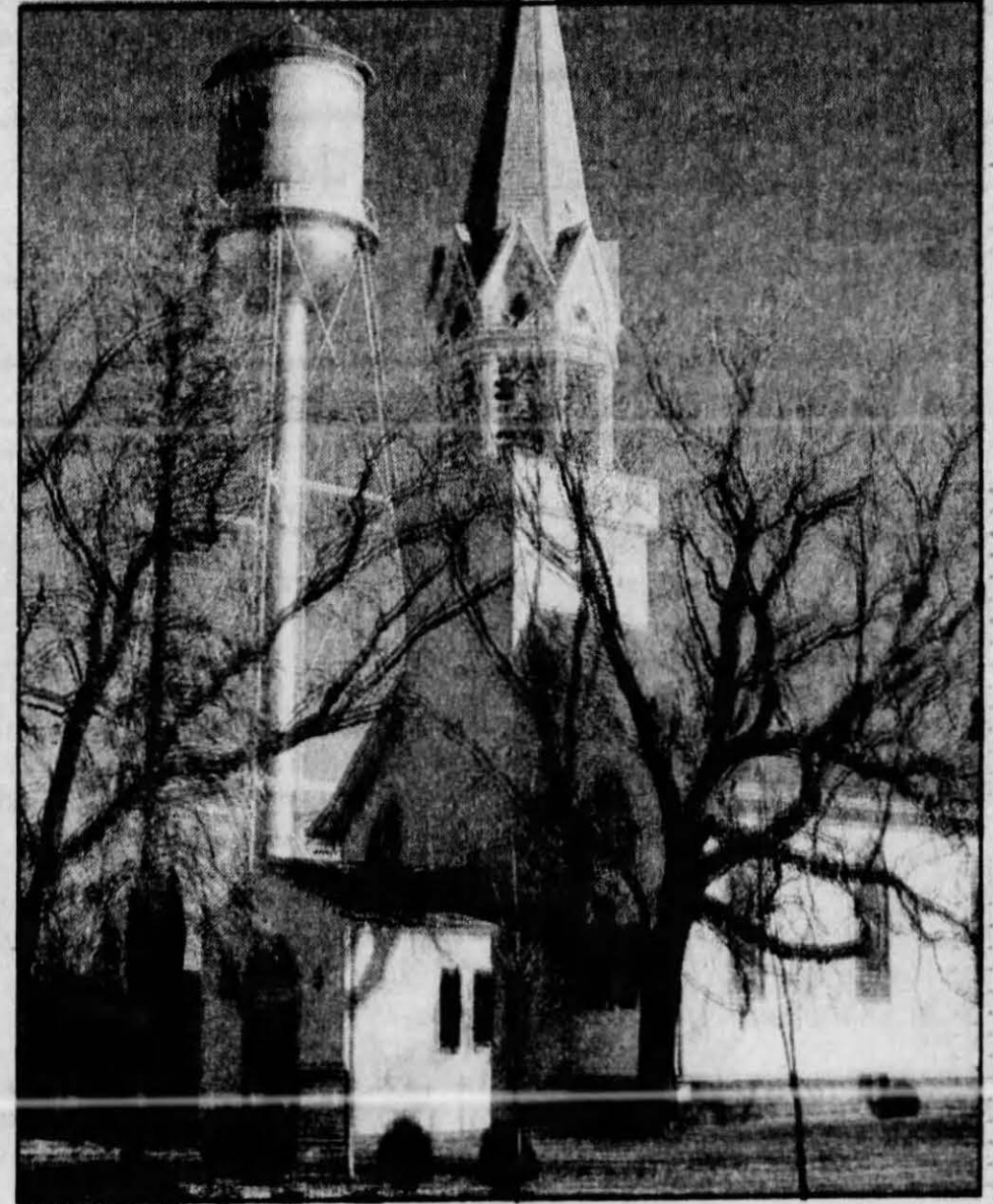
But he added that a downtown revital-

Please see Creek/B-2



Book 'em: From left, Marcia Brick, president of the Black Creek Library Board, Earl Pasch, village president, and Diane Wendt,

librarian, meet in the community's newly constructed library. The library was built at a cost of \$300,000.



Twin towers: The Black Creek water tower stands side by side with St. Mary's Church in the Outagamie County village.

Creek

ization effort, assisted by the state of Wisconsin's Main Street Program, is scheduled to begin in 1992. New street lighting, road widening and utility work are planned.

Not surprisingly the village, in keeping with its penchant for pursuing civic improvement projects, persuaded the state to offer aid in sprucing up a larger portion of Main Street than it originally planned.

"Actually the village took the initiative to do the Main Street part," Nellis said. "The state was only going to do certain portions of

it. And the village said, 'Wait a minute, if you're doing that, let's take a look at refurbishing the downtown.' "

A new look perhaps, but Revels doesn't think the basic character of Black Creek will change too much.

"This is a very friendly town, very friendly," said Revels, brushing off the shoulder of one patron and seating another. "We like living here.

"We seem to have just about whatever a person needs right here in Black Creek," Revels said.

■ **Next week:** Cooperstown in Manitowoc County